



MEMORANDUM

TO: Councilmember Sally Clark, Chair, COBE
Councilmember Sally Bagshaw
Councilmember Tim Burgess

FROM: Diane M. Sugimura

DATE: January 29, 2010

SUBJECT: Committee Briefing: DPD Monthly Report, February 3, 2010

2009 in Review

It was a challenging year. Building permit revenues tell the story. In 2009 we brought in \$12.7 million, compared with \$23.5 in 2008 and \$31.0 in 2007. As can be seen in the table below, the volume of permits for the smaller projects has remained somewhat steady the past two years; however, the large projects have slowed down tremendously. The numbers are even more pronounced with the Master Use Permits.

Type of Permit	2009	2008	2007
Construction: 48 hour*	3257	3908	4601
2 week*	1502	1508	1669
6 week*	831	1547	2097
Master Use Permits	380	741	1121
• MUP with Design Review	28	89	**

*time to initial review

** 15 year average = 100; peak in 2005 = 137

Electronic Plan Review, Soon to Arrive

Development is well underway on DPD's electronic plan submission and review system, also known as EPlan. We have recruited about 60 participants for the pilot. Interest has been very high; however, they are worried that they may not have projects to submit! We will start testing in about a month, with the go-live in April.



Applicants see benefit in a number of ways: enormous paper savings since they will no longer have to provide multiple copies for initial submission and correction rounds; ease of assembling corrected plan sets; and ability to take care of many tasks online such as requesting a pre-application site visit. We also learned that while some are interested in an all-electronic process, others value personal interaction with staff. As a result of that feedback, we are building in flexibility to allow applicants to choose the intake option that fits their needs.

Recession Fallout Delays Some Code Violation Cases

We currently have ten violation cases on hold due to foreclosures or bankruptcies. We anticipate we will be seeing more of this in the months to come. We have been unable to get the violations cured, and Law cannot proceed with enforcement litigation until the foreclosure or bankruptcy has been resolved. The cases include grading and building code violations, land use violations (e.g. an illegal unit, an unapproved use), a couple of properties with junk and/or too many vehicles stored on a residential lot, and two cases of vacant buildings that do not meet maintenance requirements. We are monitoring these cases regularly so that we can pursue compliance when there is a new owner or a bankruptcy has been resolved. This delay can be frustrating for neighbors. We are making every effort to keep them informed about the situation.

Summary of Legislation Currently at Council

Fee Ordinance: This is on the agenda for Committee discussion, February 3. The proposed changes are relatively minor, intended to adequately cover the cost of the work being done. Overall, we anticipate that this will add approximately \$500,000 annually to our revenues.

Multifamily Code Update: Thank you for your adoption of the Midrise and Highrise portions of the update. Lowrise highlights include:

1. Better townhouse design, including a new Administrative Design Review process
2. Protection for our single family neighborhoods
3. Green construction and landscaping
4. Affordable housing

Comprehensive Plan Amendments: This year's ordinance includes amendments to the Future Land Use Map in South Downtown, Roosevelt, Greenwood and Ballard to allow zoning recommendations that have come out of neighborhood-focused planning efforts. Policy amendments recognize the goal of using enhanced design guidelines in Northgate as part of potential rezone actions; to allow non-residential uses in one building at Sand Point; and to promote housing affordability by linking new housing development with transit service. Council's public hearing is February 8.

Livable South Downtown Planning Study, Executive Recommendations: Recommendations were submitted to Council in late 2009, after a multi-year planning process in the South Downtown neighborhoods of Pioneer Square, Chinatown/International District, Little Saigon and the area around the sports stadia. Recommendations include proposed rezones, expansion of City development incentive programs, and other measures to expand open

space, protect historic resources and revitalize these neighborhoods. We worked with a 25-member stakeholders group, as well as many meetings with various organizations throughout the communities.

Adaptive Re-use in Industrial Zones: This is in response to the Industrial Jobs Resolution adopted in 2007. DPD was asked to determine whether there were opportunities to allow existing structures in industrial areas to be used for non-industrial activities without disrupting the industrial nature of the areas. The proposal would allow structures five stories or taller in the northern portion of the Duwamish Manufacturing/Industrial Center to exceed the current size of use limits for office and retail uses. It includes dispersion criteria to help prevent disruption of surrounding industrial functions.

Interim Use of Idle Construction Sites and Existing Parking Lots: During this down economy many development proposals are awaiting the return of the capital markets and local demand. Vacant sites and holes in the ground can pose a safety hazard as well as create an unsightly condition. The intent of the proposal is to address issues of safety, appearance and street-level activity, and to allow property owners some economic return on their property while awaiting a more positive market. The amendment would allow establishment of certain interim uses, including principal use parking, on qualifying sites in appropriate non-residential zones. Though this proposed legislation is currently at Council, DPD is conducting additional review and analysis to similarly allow parking around light rail stations on an interim basis.

Ballard Industrial Areas Re-mapping: This proposal follows up on a previous Comprehensive Plan amendment that said General Industrial zones are generally not appropriate inside urban villages. DPD is recommending changing three areas inside the Ballard Urban Village.

Northgate Design Guidelines: A product of the ongoing Northgate planning process to spur desired development in the Northgate Urban Center is a revised set of neighborhood-specific design guidelines. The revised Northgate Design Guidelines would deepen the focus on the pedestrian environment, key to the future of this growing urban center.

2010 Neighborhood Plans Announced

During budget deliberations City Council asked the Executive to recommend two neighborhoods for 2010 Neighborhood Plan Update work. In Rainier Beach, the neighborhood plan update could provide the opportunity to address a range of community priorities including a renewed focus on improving their commercial core, considering potential growth around the rail station, and linking the two areas along S. Henderson St.

The Broadview-Bitter Lake-Haller Lake Neighborhood Plan Update will consider ways to take advantage of the anticipated bus rapid transit service arriving in 2013. The challenges resulting from recent growth in the Bitter Lake Urban Village will also be addressed.

Preservation Green Lab

The National Trust for Historic Preservation launched its Preservation Green Lab in partnership with the City of Seattle to work on policy initiatives that support the reuse and sustainable retrofit of older and historic buildings. Although new construction has been at the forefront of the green building movement, the reality is that every building in which we live, work and play is an existing building. Therefore, in order to combat the climate impacts resulting from energy use in buildings, we need to develop programs that dramatically reduce energy use within existing buildings.

The greenest building is often the one that already exists. Recognizing this, the Preservation Green Lab has identified three key areas where it is focusing its efforts:

1. **Energy Codes:** Performance based codes to allow for flexibility
2. **District Energy:** Policies and tools to help cities implement district energy systems
3. **Urban Density:** PGL proposes to develop guidance and policies on how to maintain an appropriate balance between preserving existing buildings while increasing neighborhood density, in order to maximize the sustainability benefits of infill developments within urban settings.

Community Outreach

January 31 – Phinney Annual Home Improvement Fair: Every year DPD sends building, land use, sidesewer, and electrical experts to this popular fair. Staff often talk to more than 200 people about their home improvement projects.

Feb. 8, 9, 11, 16, 18, 23, 25 – 2009 Seattle Energy Code: DPD staff will begin public review of the proposed new Energy Code, to be adopted by Council in 2010.

Feb. 23 – Citywide Design Guidelines: DPD is hosting this public meeting at City Hall to review proposed updates to our multifamily/commercial design guidelines, which apply citywide outside of the downtown.

Feb. 25 – Committee for Central Waterfront Partnerships: This will be the third working session of this committee, at City Hall. These sessions are open to the public.

Central Waterfront: Four public meetings to discuss ideas and issues around Central Waterfront public space. DPD, SDOT and Parks will co-host, with members of the Committee for the Central Waterfront Partnership available to discuss their work.

March 4 – Miller Community Center

March 6 – Northgate Community Center

March 8 – Van Asselt Community Center

March 11 – High Point Community Center